



Montevideo Maru Memorial Committee

MvM Newsletter 9

January 2010

Montevideo Maru Memorial Trust will incorporate

BY KEITH JACKSON

BEFORE CHRISTMAS it became clear that our simple, informal committee would have to incorporate as the Montevideo Maru Memorial Trust.

This is a necessary step in helping us qualify for tax deductibility for donations to ensure an appropriate memorial can be built in Canberra to mark the tragedy.

The move to incorporate has led to some changes in the structure of the committee. All members were asked to renominate if they wanted to continue in the new regime - some did, some didn't.

I want to thank Phil Ainsworth, Andrea Williams, Hooky Street, Liz Thurston and Clive Troy for continuing. I have agreed to occupy the position of President for the next year, at the end of which elections will be held.

New faces include Kerry Sibraa (Vice-President), Donald Hook (Public Officer), Bob Lawrence (Secretary) and Teddy Haryjanto (Treasurer).

Hon Kerry Sibraa AO is former Senate President, High Commissioner to Zimbabwe and Chairman of the Parliamentary Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee. He will be of particular importance in our dealings with the Federal Government and will work with me on this. He is a distant relative of NX34251 Private Lloyd Sibraa, 1st Independent Company, who died on the *Montevideo Maru* aged 23.

Donald Hook, a Canberra-resident and former senior ABC journalist, served with distinction in South-East Asia. His father, Sergeant Wally Hook of the First Independent Company in Kavieng, was in Rabaul for medical treatment at the time of the Japanese invasion. He and another commando walked for weeks before being picked up and taken to Port Moresby on the *Laurabada*

Bob Lawrence is a former PNG-based journalist and media adviser to Joe Hockey MP and Senator Helen Coonan. He is honorary media officer to the Gallipoli Club and a director of Jackson Wells. Bob will also work with Don and me on media relations and will be a liaison point with the Federal Opposition.

Teddy Haryjanto *MCom BAcctg* is Finance Controller at Jackson Wells.

Bernard Collaery, a leading Canberra solicitor, has generously agreed to be the Trust's honorary legal adviser.

Clarifying the life and beliefs of the Rev Arthur Brawn

BY EDNA OAKES

This three-page article, *Unveiling the riddle of the Montevideo Maru* by Alan Gill in the *Catholic Weekly* of November 2009, has only just come to our notice. There are a few inaccuracies in it that I need to clear up.



My father, the Rev Arthur Brawn, left New Britain in April 1935 on the *Montoro* and did not return to PNG until 1965. He didn't stop thinking about his mates for the remainder of his life.

My husband's father, Rev Dan Oakes, was one of them. He certainly was not a survivor of the *Montevideo Maru* as said under the picture in the article.

Paragraph 5 of the article says the old man carried a grouse. He certainly did not have a 'grouse' and would never have called his mates 'missos'. The whole of this paragraph is wrong.

On 2 July 1988, a dedication was held in North Parramatta at the site of the Uniting Church Theological College. The plaque from Haberfield was placed on a wall of a building there. It was a plaque to twelve missionaries lost in the war in PNG and the Northern Territory.

On 1 July 1992, a service was held at North Parramatta to commemorate 50 years since the *Montevideo Maru* sank. Alan Gill did not refer to the *Montevideo Maru* memorial services held in Brisbane each year or to the service held at Subic Bay in the Philippines in 2009.

There are other inaccuracies and my brother, David Brawn, will visit the office of the *Catholic Weekly* to iron these out.

A lot of the information seemed to come from Alan's book on youth migration *Likely Lads and Lassies*. Over the years, as the Herald's *Religious Editor*, he has written articles about my father and the *Montevideo Maru*. This is the first time he has really annoyed my family. I have now got it off my chest!

I know it is not your responsibility but I would just like to bring the inaccuracies to your attention as your name is mentioned at the end of the article.

My father was convinced that all ten Methodist missionaries from the Rabaul area were on the *Montevideo Maru* up until he died, although there is doubt about it now regarding some of them.

Edna and George Oakes, like Alan Gill, are Friends of Montevideo Maru

JANUARY NOTES

LARK FORCE ASSOCIATION ANNUAL SERVICE

From John Cleary

You may wish to let people know that on Sunday week, January 17th, members of the Lark Force Association and 2/22nd Battalion, accompanied by the Salvation Army Band from Brunswick will be conducting their annual service at Melbourne's Shrine of Remembrance.

RECRUIT PEOPLE AS FRIENDS

The Montevideo Maru Memorial Committee has many tasks, including fundraising for a memorial at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. There are now nearly 200 Friends of Montevideo Maru and the more Friends we have, the more our voices will be heard in Canberra.

Encourage people to join as Friends and to receive this monthly newsletter by emailing Keith Jackson at benelong@bigpond.net.au (or write c/- Jackson Wells Pty Ltd, PO Box 1743, Neutral Bay NSW 2089).

DONATE TO THE MEMORIAL FUND

Please give what you can afford and encourage friends, relatives and other people (especially companies that may see this as a good project) to do the same.

PAYMENTS. Cheques to 'Montevideo Maru Memorial Committee' to PO Box 1743, Neutral Bay NSW 2089. Or make a direct deposit to the Committee's bank account: BSB 082-401 A/c No 16-083-2367. If you make a direct deposit, let Teddy Haryjanto know by sending an email to tharyjanto@jacksonwells.com.au

MEMORIAL FUND. Total contributions are \$4,050 (last month \$1,725). New donors: Bill Welbourne \$30, Donald Hook \$250, Mary Symons \$480, Grace Lovell \$70, Peter Jackson \$300, Judy Ireland \$50, Patricia Fittler \$35, Nigel Cooper \$200, Albert Speer \$200, Ted Cooper \$35, David Brook \$35, Anonymous \$285, George Oakes \$35 [includes DVD sales]

INFORMATION ABOUT MISSING PEOPLE

If you are seeking information about a person who was held as a prisoner of war or civilian internee in connection with a conflict in the twentieth century, International Committee of the Red Cross archives may be able to provide information in its possession.

To find out more, go to this website <http://www.icrc.org/eng/contact-archives>

The ICRC Archives will reply to your request within 6 months. There will be no exchange of correspondence in the meantime. The information you receive will be in the form of an attestation containing all data known to the ICRC about the person concerned.

Research conducted free of charge: Except for World War I, research is carried out free of charge where requested by the individual concerned or by next of kin (brother, sister, wife, husband, father, mother, children, grand-children).

Paid research: In all other cases a fee of 100 Swiss francs is charged. When your case is dealt with you will receive an email setting out payment procedure.

MVM SUB-COMMITTEES

MEMORIAL SUB-COMMITTEE

Task: Memorial fundraising and construction.

Activities: Fund-raising; memorial design and construction, AWM liaison.

Co-convenors: Clive Troy and Phil Ainsworth

clive.troy@bigpond.com

WAR GRAVE SUB-COMMITTEE

Task: Declare sinking site as official war grave.

Activities: Liaison with Office Australian of Australian War Graves.

Convenor: Elizabeth Thurston

liz_thurston@hotmail.com

RECOGNITION SUB-COMMITTEE

Task: Consolidate Rabaul and Montevideo Maru stories as continuing part of Australian history.

Activities: Form and manage a History Working Party including government representation to ensure this important part of history is permanently entrenched in the Australian story.

Convenor: Andrea Williams

andrea.williams@bigpond.com

NOMINAL ROLL SUB-COMMITTEE

Task: Search for and locate the nominal roll

Activities: Liaison with relevant government and other authorities to establish and manage a joint working party.

Convenor: Chris Diercke

diercke@optusnet.com.au

FEEDBACK

BERNARD COLLAERY

I should be honoured and pleased to assist your Committee pro bono with incorporation pursuant to the Associations Incorporation Act (ACT) and to seek tax deductible status from the Treasury/ATO.

My father has no known grave and I often visit the memorial at Runnymede to the 20,000 odd WW2 Europe theatre aviators with no grave. He was a RAAF Beaufighter pilot who went missing in action in June '44 after ditching in the North Sea shortly before I was born.

SUE PASCOE

Thank you for producing yet another newsletter! I find the process so healing - that at last truth and recognition will emerge.

PETER PRITCHARD

What a corker newsletter! This is all excellent progress. I must congratulate you all on your perseverance and enterprise in all you do for the memory of the fallen in this disaster. Amazing progress has been made to help so many grieve for the first time and come to some healing of memories.

MARGARET & SCOTT HENDERSON

Thank you for the MVM Newsletter. What a coup to have Peter Garrett as the next patron. "Well done that man".

What a wonderful award to Albert Speer and so well deserved. He often kept in touch with me over the years just to say hello and let me know about his search for information. I once received a call about the nominal roll when we were at a wedding on Dunk Island. Distance was never a barrier for Albert.

I have known Bill Linggood for over 60 years and this is the first time I have heard him express that opinion. Bill is the quiet achiever but I'm sure he would not have written this article if he was not pretty sure of his facts. I know my father was not on the *Montevideo Maru* but he was on New Ireland and was not seen in Rabaul, like the other missionaries. I thought Gilian Nikakis's article was powerful in a very personal way. Thank you again for your part in all of this.

JUDY IRELAND

It is strange how things happen. I was recently admitted to hospital and, before the operation, my surgeon said to the anaesthetist, "How was PNG". I pricked

up my ears, as we had lived there for three years in the early '70's, and asked the anaesthetist where he was in New Guinea and he replied Rabaul.

I told him about Uncle Jim and the *Montevideo Maru* and he told me his uncle was on the ship. I asked if he'd seen the documentary and he replied "No", so I told him of the DVD and posted the information to him. His name is Dr Colin Pearce and hopefully he will contact you in the near future.

KATHLEEN COOK

I lived in Rabaul from 1962-72 and am very familiar with the story of the *Montevideo Maru*. I have read many accounts as well as the story the locals tell. One version is that the civilians who were captured by the Japanese in Rabaul were placed on the *Montevideo Maru* and taken to the south of the island where they were shot/beheaded and thrown overboard. These civilians were local businessmen, heads of local companies and husbands who had foreseen the attack on Rabaul.

To commemorate this incident, a memorial was placed near the wharf where the ship was supposed to have left. This was a low standing plaque with a brief inscription of the essential fact. Rabaul as you know was devastated by the 1994 eruptions and has now become a ghost town. I recently visited the town and the war memorial at Bita Paka. One of the highlights of my visit was discovering that the small plaque to the people of the *Montevideo Maru* has been installed in this wonderful memorial garden. It is situated just inside the gate along with several military plaques.

I could talk Rabaul and our wartime history for hours but just want to congratulate you on your efforts to get this piece of history out there. This is only the beginning. The story of the fall of Rabaul and the subsequent war with Japan has to be pieced together by people like yourself.

BRYAN MATTHEWS

Please sign me up as a Friend of Montevideo Maru. I have read of the tragedy spasmodically over the years and would like to read all the comments. I doubt whether the Federal Government would fund a search by the outfit that located HMAS *Sydney*, *Kormoran* and *Centaur*, but who can tell what may happen in the future.

DOREEN (MANSLEY) BEADLE,

I am a sister of the late Frederick William Mansley, NX60075, Driver AASC 2/22nd Battalion. When the Japanese took possession of Rabaul, Fred with Lieutenant Allen and two others attempted to escape. Fred had an injury to his leg and felt he was impeding progress for the others so he went back and surrendered. He was subsequently seen to board the *Montevideo Maru*.

Over the last few months I have been thinking that God wanted Fred on the *Montevideo Maru* to help cheer and comfort those on board at the time. The others made good their escape and arrived back in Sydney where Lieutenant Allen visited my mother.

Last March as I stood at the HMAS *Sydney* memorial in Geraldton WA late at night, appreciating the details and the honour it affords each crew member resting on the ocean floor, I dreamt of a similar memorial for those lost on the *Montevideo Maru* situated on the east coast of Australia on a hill where one can look out over the ocean.

Instead of the canopy of seagulls representing the crew members of HMAS *Sydney* there could be a canopy of larks to represent all who perished on the *Montevideo Maru*. I have chosen larks as members of the 2/22nd Battalion were known as Lark Force. Larks fly upwards to a great height singing as they mount. It has been reported that men in the water were singing as the ship went down.

I am connected, in a way, with both events. My husband just missed a posting to HMAS *Sydney* in November 1941 and my brother perished on the *Montevideo Maru*. We are thankful to each memorial committee member for their efforts.

JOY LIMBERT

My husband Philip's uncle, Private Frederick George Limbert, VX26548, of the 2/22 Australian Infantry Battalion, is believed to have been aboard the *Montevideo Maru* when it was sunk by the USS *Sturgeon*.

Private Limbert's date of death on his Service Certificate is 1 July 1942 and it states he was a prisoner of war. We have photos of Frederick's time in Rabaul that he sent to his brother George in Melbourne. George finally found out about his brother's fate in the 1950's from a friend, Raymond Bailey, who shared a tent with Frederick in Rabaul and who had escaped on a small ship.

Frederick Limbert was born in Liverpool England and migrated to Australia with his parents and brother in 1922. He joined the Army on 13 June 1940 in South Melbourne. Several friends, including Raymond Bailey, joined up within the week. Frederick was 23 years old when he died.

GEORGE OAKES

The information about the *Montevideo Maru* which follows was available to the government after 1948, when the war trials were concluded. Why didn't the government do something about it then?

In *Hostages to Freedom - The Fall of Rabaul* by Peter Stone on p 276 it refers to an Australian Army Officer obtaining a letter dated 6-9-43 from the Japanese Navy showing a nominal roll of prisoners on the *Montevideo Maru* as 1053. On p 328 it mentions a letter dated 6-1-43 also showing 1053 prisoners including 845

defence personnel and 208 civilians. The names on this nominal roll are listed in *Rabaul 1942* by Douglas Aplin.

The Kavieng Massacre took place on Kavieng wharf on 18 February 1944. This massacre took place suddenly, apparently when the Japanese thought the US Forces were going to land near Kavieng after the town received a solid bombardment by shells from nearby US warships.

At this stage the Japanese must have realised they were losing the war. The Japanese Admiral who gave the order for the massacre was later found guilty of these prisoners' deaths and hanged. It is thought that about 27-30 prisoners were killed on the wharf.

The details of what happened are well covered in *Kavieng Massacre* by Raden Dunbar. Of these names at least 19 are also on the *Montevideo Maru* list. For these names to have been included on the *Montevideo Maru* list it means that the list must have been compiled sometime after the 18 February 1944 and then back dated to 6-1-43 or 6-9-43 to make the list appear more realistic.

I believe this was a deliberate attempt by the Japs to cover up the Kavieng Massacre which was only found out during the war trials in Japan in 1948 by Albert Klestadt who spoke Japanese.

From *Kavieng Massacre* we can see that the Japanese did everything possible to cover it up. If the Japanese were cunning enough to do this, can we really accept any of the names of civilians on the *Montevideo Maru* list.

Also by adding names to the list they were hoping to shift the reason for the death of these prisoners from themselves to the US submarine that sunk the *Montevideo Maru* especially after early 1944 when the Japanese must have realised they were losing the war

Many descendants of these civilian prisoners now believe they were not on the *Montevideo Maru* but killed elsewhere. Will we ever get the truth of what happened?

The Committee, with the assistance of Prof Hank Nelson and other historians, last year assembled the most accurate version it could of the story of the fall of Rabaul and the sinking of the Montevideo Maru.

This was presented in the submission to the Federal Government last November and, as we have advised previously, is on the internet here.

http://asopa.typepad.com/files/_submissionfinal.pdf

Much myth and speculation still surrounds these and related tragedies, some of it unhelpful to a clear understanding of what really happened.

One of the Committee important tasks is to continue to seek the truth - KJ